First Paterson Members Help Irene Victims, Get Visit From Obama

This past Sabbath and Sunday, members of Allegheny East Conference’s (AEC) First church of Paterson, N.J., showed up at the city’s Lowes store parking lot in droves to help the thousands of fellow residents who were evacuated after Hurricane Irene flooded their homes. Utilizing 310 AEC volunteers, the First church of Paterson served as the local coordinating organization for providing logistics and distribution of nearly $300,000 worth of food products, personal care items and cleaning supplies to 2,340 families (representing 6,218 individuals) impacted by the storm. Feed The Children, a Christian, international, nonprofit relief organization, shipped three trailers of commodities from their Tennessee warehouse to Paterson.

The efforts even drew national attention when President Barack Obama visited the site on Sunday. The president, joined by Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey, spoke with residents in the parking lot for nearly half an hour, spending most of his time listening to them talk about flood waters damaging their homes and cars.
“President Obama thanked us for giving back to the community and being there to help others in their time of need,” said David L. King (pictured with Obama), pastor of the First church of Paterson and lead director and organizer of the relief efforts.—LaFayette Trawick

READ MORE AND SEE SLIDESHOW

Latino Membership Tops 21,000

At 21,000 members, Latinos in the Columbia Union are the fastest growing segment. To help meet the needs of this burgeoning subset, most conferences offered Hispanic camp meetings this year.

With nearly 10,000 Spanish-speaking members, the Potomac Conference is leading the charge followed closely by New Jersey, which claims just over 7,000. At Potomac’s January Hispanic Ministries Convention, 1,500 attendees committed to baptizing nearly 1,600 new members this year. So far, they’ve baptized nearly 400. What’s driving this growth? Establishing the union’s School of Discipleship, holding small group meetings in members’ homes and preaching a last day truth are some of the reasons Hispanic Ministries coordinators around the union cite.

Rubén Ramos, assistant to the president of the Columbia Union Conference for Multilingual Ministries, notes that many joining the church are new to Seventh-day Adventism. “They bring their network of friends into the church who, in turn, bring more friends; that creates a snowball effect,” he says.—Taashi Rowe

Noticias: La Membrecía Hispana Pasa 21,000

Los 21,000 Hispanos de la Unión de Columbia, son el segmento que más rápido está creciendo. Por esta razón, la mayoría de las conferencias ofrecieron Campamentos Hispanos este año.

Con casi 10,000 miembros hispanos, la Conferencia de Potomac tiene la mayor concentración de hispanos. Le sigue la Conferencia de New Jersey con 7,000 miembros hispanos. En el Congreso Hispano de la Conferencia de Potomac, mas de 1,500 miembros se comprometieron a bautizar 1,600 nuevos miembros en este año. Y ya han bautizado casi 400. ¿Qué es lo que está promoviendo este crecimiento? El establecimiento de escuelas de discipulado, el ministerio de hogares iglesias (grupos pequeños), y el compromiso de los creyentes a proclamar la verdad para estos últimos días de la historia, son algunas de las razones mencionadas por los coordinadores
Washington Adventist University Welcomes Former Atlantic Union Students

Washington Adventist University’s (WAU) efforts to establish a branch campus at Atlantic Union College (AUC) in South Lancaster, Mass., bore its first fruit as WAU welcomed transfers to its Takoma Park, Md., campus as the fall semester started.

Nereida Lobo and Christina Reveil are two sophomore AUC transfers who are taking advantage of the university’s popular nursing program.

“I feel comfortable here; it’s like a second home,” Reveil said. “The people are nice, and I am considering staying in the area after I graduate.”

Another student making the transition is Ralph Vieux (pictured), a senior theology major. He was impressed with campus and appreciative of the help he received saying, “The faculty has been warm, receptive and helpful with registration.”

Timothy Nelson, dean of men, was optimistic with the transition. “There have been growing pains but we have learned a lot and had a lot of fun,” he said.—Kevin Manuel

North Valley Members Feed Families With Sick Kids

hispanos de la unión.

Rubén Ramos (foto), Director del Ministerio Multilingüe de la Unión de Columbia, nota que muchos de los que están uniéndose a la iglesia son nuevos al mensaje Adventista. “Ellos traen sus amigos a la iglesia, y esos amigos a sus amigos.”—Taashi Rowe
A team of 10 eager members of Potomac Conference’s North Valley church in Roanoke, Va., recently helped cook and serve a meal to 35 temporary residents and their children at the Ronald McDonald House of Southwest Virginia. Church members were so blessed by their efforts to offer support to people going through a difficult time that they hope to make this a quarterly outreach project.

Staff at Ronald McDonald Houses provide a safe and comfortable home away from home to families of ill children who need special treatment at nearby hospitals. However, home staff also rely on the support and love of volunteers to help serve food to the hungry families.—Beth Michaels

READ MORE AND SEE PHOTOS

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Glenville Church Block Party Attracts 400

During a recent Sabbath, members of the Allegheny East Conference’s Glenville church in Cleveland took the worship service out of the building and into the neighborhood! There were some 400 attendees who enjoyed an inspirational message from Pastor MyRon Edmonds, songs of praise and a performance by the Pathfinder Superstar Drum and Flag Corps. There were health screenings, free food, entertainment and drawings for a free iPad and laptop. Members also distributed more than 350 backpacks full of school supplies and 100 vouchers for school uniforms.

The block party was just one part of the church’s Forty 4 Family Enrichment series themed “Healing and Hope for Families.” Every Wednesday evening and during three sessions each Sabbath for 40 days, guest speakers touched on family conflict resolution, forgiveness, parenting, dating, empowering teenagers, blended families, breaking dysfunctional family cycles and other important topics. For more details and to see more photos, visit the church’s Facebook page.—Tammy F. Whitson

READ MORE AND SEE SLIDESHOW
Radford’s Deaf Member Shares God’s Love for 45 Years

Being a literature evangelist requires a unique skill set: someone who is very comfortable with people, can regularly take rejection and has a passion to keep going no matter what the circumstances. Lee Roy McKinney, a Radford (Va.) church member, has all three.

“Even though he is deaf, he won’t stop trying to win souls for Jesus,” comments Rhonda Poff, his daughter. “For more than 45 years, he has been going door to door selling everything from small paperback editions of Steps to Christ to books like The Great Controversy.”

McKinney uses flashcards to explain his work and a notebook to write out answers to questions. He also gives away small tracts and Bible correspondence cards to almost everyone he meets. McKinney’s testimony is simple: “There are many blessings in working for God. I want to give this wonderful truth to everyone. Jesus will come soon and I want to help finish the work.”—Dan Jensen

Former Mount Vernon Academy Student Puts Skills Into Practice

At the beginning of the 2010-11 school year, Marcelo Amorin arrived on the Mount Vernon Academy’s (MVA) Ohio campus from São Paulo, Brazil. His command of the English language was such that he answered most questions with either “yes” or “no” regardless of what was said to him.

However, MVA staff and faculty worked patiently with Amorin and the other exchange students. They also arranged for tutors and volunteers to work with all of the English as a Second Language students. Within just a few weeks, Amorin was not only able to understand what was being said, but he was also joining classroom discussions. Now a college student, he wrote to MVA staff to share that he obtained a summer English teaching position back home in Brazil. “I pray that every life touched at Mount Vernon Academy will be
able to go and change the world,” said Robert Stevenson, principal.—*Tina Stevenson*

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**Mountain View Pastors Enjoy Retreat**

When they are not busy strengthening people’s relationship in Christ, an admittedly tough job, pastors need some down time too. With that in mind, the pastors of the Mountain View Conference recently retreated to the Valley Vista Adventist Center in Huttonsville, W.Va. “Most of our ‘retreats’ are nothing more than a bunch of meetings, but this year we wanted to offer something different,” Victor Zill, conference executive secretary and treasurer, shared. “We really wanted to plan some activities to bring our team closer together. Our pastors work so hard, and we are grateful for their ongoing service.”

The pastors enjoyed an afternoon playing games and a day on the Tygart Lake near Grafton, W.Va. Bob Boggess, retired interim pastor of the Winter Springs (Fla.) church; Frank Bondurant, Columbia Union Conference’s vice president for Ministries Development; Rubén Ramos, Columbia Union Conference’s Multilingual Ministries director; and Randall Murphy, retired Mountain View Conference president, all had inspiring topics to share with the pastors.

“This was the most refreshing pastors’ retreat I’ve ever been to!” said Stewart Pepper (pictured) of the Charleston (W.Va.) church. “Thanks!”—*Monica Zill*

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**Meet Jorge Coxaj, New Jersey Pastor**

Jorge Coxaj (pronounced Co-shak) joins the New Jersey Conference’s pastoral team as pastor of the Hackettstown, Phillipsburg and Rockaway District. Pastor Coxaj most recently served as the youth pastor of the Westchester Korean church in the Greater
New York Conference. Pastor Coxaj, (pictured with his bride, Alfredina) is a graduate of Antillean Adventist University in Puerto Rico.

“I think the mission we have here is really beautiful,” he says. “There aren’t a lot of churches here, so we’ll be breaking new ground. I love being in places where we know the ministry can expand. People may limit their dreams, but I always ask, ‘are we limiting God to our aspirations?’ Let’s dream big. This is only the beginning of the movement that will impact people for Christ.”

The young pastor has already set a goal of 2,000 Bible studies by this time next year.—Jim Greene and Taashi Rowe

UPCOMING EVENTS

NAD, Columbia Union to Host “ReCharge” Youth Leadership Training

Youth and Young Adult Ministries leaders from around the Columbia Union Conference are invited to take time to “ReCharge.” This one-day training will be held September 17, from 2-8 p.m., at the union’s headquarters in Columbia, Md., and will feature presentations from James Black, Sr., North American Division’s (NAD) Youth Ministries director; Manny Cruz, NAD Youth Ministries associate; Kris Eckenroth, pastor of the Grace Outlet church in Reading, Pa.; Sergio Manente, pastor of the Highland View Academy church in Hagerstown, Md.; JB McMillen, Youth and Young Adult Ministries leader at the Redeeming Grace church in Chesapeake, Va.; and many others.

The $20 registration fee will include a drawstring backpack, handouts, books including *The Youth Ministry Formula* and *Tips for Youth Leaders*, resource packet and light supper. For more information, call (410) 997-3414 or email jdavis@columbiaunion.net.

September 9-11: Chesapeake Conference’s Youth Leaders Convention will be held at the Mount Aetna Camp and Retreat Center in Hagerstown, Md. Featured speaker: Randy Fishell, *GUIDE Magazine* editor. To register, call (410) 995-1910, ext. 2337

September 11: 9/11 Memorial Concert 25 The Student Association at Washington
Adventist University will be presenting a September 11 memorial concert at the on-campus Sligo church featuring Committed, a group of Oakwood University (Ala.) students who won the The Sing-Off, NBC’s televised singing competition. A portion of the proceeds will go to the 9/11 Worthy Student Fund. The concert begins at 8 p.m., Sunday, September 11, at 7700 Carroll Avenue in Takoma Park, Md. Tickets can be purchased through ticketleap.com.

**September 25: Vibrant Life Fun Run**  
Vibrant Life’s annual 5K Fun Run/Walk in Hagerstown, Md., is scheduled for September 25 on Let’s Move Day. Registration runs from 7:30-8:30 a.m., and the race starts at 9 a.m. Get more information online at VibrantLife.com, or call (800) 876-7313.

For more news and up-to-date information from the Columbia Union Conference, visit columbiaunion.org

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To share the Visitor News Bulletin with friends and church members across the Columbia Union, click the “Forward to a Friend” link below so all the photos and copy will appear correctly. Also, encourage them to sign up for the email at www.columbiaunion.org/emailnews. Thank you!

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President Barack Obama visits a flood relief center in the parking lot of a Lowes store in Paterson, N.J., to meet residents and volunteers. He also talks with David L. King, pastor of the First church of Paterson and the lead director and organizer of the two-day effort.

First Paterson Members Help Irene Victims, Obama Visits Relief Site
Story by LaFayette Trawick
Published 9/7/2011

Lifelong Paterson, N.J., residents Kathy and Greg are expecting a baby in one month. However, due to flooding from Hurricane Irene they have not been able to get to her home on Haledon Street for the past week. Recalling that when she left she had water up to her knees in her living room, Kathy said, “Our apartment was condemned this week, and we have been in a shelter, and we need all the help we can get.”

New Jersey was declared a federal disaster area after homes and businesses were flooded following Hurricane Irene. The rising Passaic River forced thousands of people from their homes and caused extensive area power outages. More than 2,000 residents had to be evacuated and more than 500 families spent the previous week in local shelters as businesses and community clinics were shuttered by the storm, this according to Ora Jane Bell, Adventist Community Services (ACS) director for the First church of Paterson and a local member of the Community Emergency Response Team.

This past Sabbath and Sunday, members of Allegheny East Conference’s (AEC) First church of Paterson showed up at the city’s Lowes store parking lot in droves to help people like Kathy and Greg. Utilizing 310 AEC volunteers, the First church of Paterson served as the local coordinating organization for providing logistics and distribution of nearly $300,000 worth of food products, personal care items and cleaning supplies to 2,340 families (representing 6,218 individuals) impacted by the storm. Over the two days, Seventh-day Adventist church members worked with Feed The Children to distribute commodities from the three trailers the organization sent up from their warehouse in Nashville, Tenn. Feed the Children is a Christian, international, nonprofit relief organization that delivers food, medicine, clothing and other necessities to individuals, children and families in need in times of famine, war, poverty or natural disaster.
The efforts even drew national attention when President Barack Obama visited the site on Sunday. The president, joined by Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey, spoke with residents in the parking lot for nearly half an hour, spending most of his time listening to them talk about flood waters damaging their homes and cars.

"President Obama thanked us for giving back to the community and being there to help others in their time of need," said David L. King, pastor of the First church of Paterson. King was the lead director and organizer of the community, faith-based initiative to quickly identify community partnerships and to set up the large disaster relief operation.

The church also worked with Meals for Kids to provide more than 1,200 hot lunches and meals to community residents and volunteers. "Once we got the call from Elder Burt-Miller from the First [Seventh-day Adventist Church] of Paterson, it only took minutes for us to say 'yes,'” said owners Sean and Jackie Collins.

Lowes' "Heroes" program quickly provided volunteers from other Lowes locations around the state to support the relief effort as well. In addition to their employee/volunteers, Lowes also provided the staging location, bottled water, buckets, security and the canopies to register local recovering residents. "We believe community involvement extends beyond the stores," says Michael Bergamo, Lowes general manager for the Paterson location. "Whether it's helping with natural disaster recovery or taking an active role in programs that make our neighborhoods better places to live, we are committed to helping our neighbors through alliances with well-respected organizations."

Lowe's corporate initiated the original idea to help the community by quickly mobilizing their internal resources within one week to identify a partnership with Feed The Children who then in turn contacted Minnie McNeil, Allegheny East Conference’s ACS director. McNeil then contacted Pastor King to request his assistance. She said one of the reasons these other organizations turned to Seventh-day Adventists was because, "ACS remains very well connected, relevant and committed to local communities nationwide."

Additional support and partnerships included the New Jersey Conference disaster relief team, along with Paterson-based Seminary Baptist Church and Redeemed Tabernacle who brought teams of volunteers of all ages to assist with the distribution of relief items. "It is great to see like faiths come together for a common mission. We are all out here trying to move the misery out of people's lives by working together and we look forward to this continued partnership,” said Rev. Alfred Steele of Seminary Baptist.

"We are prepared to serve and feed the people both physically and spiritually. Many of our residents have nowhere to go, so we are going to do the best we can to help them," said Dewitt Evering, First Paterson's first elder who also served as site manager of relief operations.
Meanwhile, several residents expressed gratitude and appreciation while standing in line for as long as two hours to register and get their relief items. "I lost everything, and my three daughters are not going to be able to start school this week until I can get back on my feet," shared Brenda.

Paterson Mayor Jeffery Jones urged patience as inspectors examined the homes. "Paterson is particularly hard hit … [There has been] tremendous devastation."

When asked why First church of Paterson members were out doing this work on Sabbath instead of being in church, King replied that they were worshipping, because service is worship. He also noted that their motto is "mission within our borders."

“Our community came together to lift spirits by living our faith and provide people with help and hope," King said summarizing the two-day effort. "This is an opportunity to share the love of Jesus with the victims of this disaster. We strengthened our footprint in this community with new partnerships, and we plan to continue our efforts to heal this community long after the flooding is gone."

Paterson members are already planning to repeat some of this past weekend’s services this coming Sabbath and Sunday.
North Valley Members Feed Ronald McDonald House Residents
Story By Beth Michaels
Published 9/6/11

A team of 10 eager members of Potomac Conference’s North Valley church in Roanoke, Va., recently helped cook and serve a meal to 35 temporary residents and their children at the Ronald McDonald House of Southwest Virginia. Church members were so blessed by their efforts to offer support to people going through a difficult time that they hope to make this a quarterly outreach project.

Staff at Ronald McDonald Houses provides a safe and comfortable home away from home to families of ill children who need special treatment at nearby hospitals. However, home staff relies on the support and love of volunteers to help serve food to the hungry families.

“As parents convert all of their energy on medical appointments and hospital trips and all of their focus on their children, most truly need the devotion of others to serve them food that will nourish their minds, body and soul,” explains member Linda Criss. “North Valley was blessed to have the chance to participate in healing ministry by providing comfort with kind words and warm smiles.”

Melissa Elkins, another member who volunteered, added, “This project meant a lot to me because a young couple and their little 3-year-old daughter with cancer had to use [this] Ronald McDonald House [from] another state. As a church, we rejoice because the Lord has brought healing to this little girl.”
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Glenville Church Block Party Attracts 400 Neighbors

Story by Tammy F. Whitson; Photos by Michael Cannon
Published 9/6/11

Members of the Glenville church in Cleveland took “service” out of the building and into the neighborhood!

Before the Forty 4 Family Back to School Block Party officially started at 10 a.m., there were tens of people waiting to be served. By noon there were some 400 attendees enjoying the inspirational message by Pastor MyRon Edmonds, songs of praise and a performance by the Pathfinder Superstar Drum & Flag Corps. There were health screenings, free food, entertainment and drawings for a free iPad and laptop. By event’s end, members also distributed more than 350 backpacks full of school supplies and 100 vouchers for school uniforms.

Councilman Jeffrey Johnson (Ward 8) showed his support of the event and later commended the congregation for a job well done. Honey Bell-Bey of the Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program also attended and said she thought it was the best and most organized event of its kind.

The block party is just one part of the church’s Forty 4 Family Enrichment Series themed “Healing and Hope for Families.” Every Wednesday evening and during three sessions each Sabbath for 40 days, guest speakers touch on family conflict resolution, forgiveness, parenting, dating, empowering teenagers, blended families, breaking dysfunctional family cycles and other important topics.

“The purpose of this 40 days for family revival is to start a movement of household family worship,” explains Pastor Edmonds. For more details and to see more photos, visit the church’s Facebook page.